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Limited entry trip limits for groundfish are generally cumulative retention limits that apply to all limited entry trawl vessels, including whiting catcher/processors and catcher vessels delivering whiting to motherships. For species with landing limits, catcher/processors are allowed to retain one limit while motherships are allowed to retain one limit per catcher vessel, but may not retain an overage from one catcher vessel to compensate for another catcher vessel that did not achieve its limit.

To increase the utilization of bycatch that is otherwise discarded as a result of trip limits, Amendment 13 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan implements an increased utilization program on June 1, 2001, which allows catcher/processors and motherships in the whiting fishery to exceed groundfish trip limits without penalty, providing specific conditions are met. These conditions include the following:

- 1) Each vessel participating in the program carries more than one NMFS-approved observer for at least 90 percent of the fishing days during a cumulative trip limit period.
- 2) All catch must be made available to the observers for sampling before it is sorted by the crew.
- 3) Prohibited species may not be retained
- 4) Any retained catch in excess of cumulative trip limits must either be: Converted to meal, mince, or oil products, which may then be sold; or donated to a bona fide tax-exempt hunger relief agency.
- 5) The vessel operator must be able to provide a receipt for the donation of groundfish landed under this program from a tax-exempt hunger relief agency immediately upon the request of an authorized officer.
- 6) The vessel operator must contact the NMFS enforcement office

nearest to the place of landing at least 24 hours before landing groundfish in excess of cumulative trip limits for distribution to a hunger relief agency.

7) The Mate's Receipt and PTOL must be made available for inspection upon request of an authorized officer throughout the cumulative limit period during which such landings occurred and for 15 days thereafter. The Mate's Receipt is an official document that states who takes possession of offloaded fish, and may be a Bill of Lading, Warehouse Receipt, or other official document that tracks the transfer of offloaded fish or fish product.

If the meal plant on board the whiting processing vessel breaks down, then no further overages may be retained for the rest of the cumulative trip limit period unless the overage is donated to a hunger relief agency. Groundfish consumed on board the vessel must be within any applicable trip limit and recorded as retained catch in any applicable logbook or report.

Logbook reporting changes

Donation of fish to a hunger relief agency must be noted in the transfer log (Product Transfer/Offloading Log (PTOL)), in the column for total value, by entering a value of "0" or "donation," followed by the name of the hunger relief agency receiving the fish. Any fish or fish product that is retained in excess of trip limits under Amendment 13, whether donated to a hunger relief agency or converted to meal, must be entered separately on the PTOL so that it is distinguishable from fish or fish products that are retained under trip limits. The information on the Mate's Receipt for any fish or fish product in excess of trip limits must be consistent with the information on the PTOL.

NMFS Enforcement Contacts

Bellingham, WA/(360)676-9268/
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Seattle, WA/(206)526-6528/
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Fort Bragg, CA/(707)575-6074/ Charles McDevitt
Bodega Bay, CA/ (707) 575-6073/ Lisa Querin